

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) In a topper/shredder mechanism for a cane harvester including a rotatable topper/shredder element mounted for rotation about an upright axis, and a ~~cane~~ cane top gathering arrangement for directing cane tops to said topper/shredder element, the improvement comprising: said topper/shredder element including a center support disposed along said axis; at least two topper/shredder disks spaced from each other along said axis and joined to said center support; each topper/shredder disk having a plurality of cutting blades joined to, and projecting outwardly from, spaced locations about its periphery; and at least one air-assist vane extending between said at least two topper/shredder disks for generating a stream of air for aiding sideways discharge of shredded cane ~~shredder-cane~~ tops from said topper/shredder element.

2. (currently amended) The topper/shredder mechanism, as defined in claim 1, wherein said topper/shredder disks ~~includes~~ an upper, a lower and at least one intermediate topper/shredder disk; and said at least one air-assist vane including first and second sections respectively extending between said upper and at least one intermediate disks, and between said lower and at least one intermediate disks.

3. (original) The topper/shredder mechanism, as defined in claim 1, wherein said topper/shredder element includes at least three air-assist vanes spaced equally from each other about said axis.

4. (original) The topper/shredder mechanism, as defined in claim 1, wherein said cane top gathering arrangement includes right- and left-hand cane top gathering rotors respectively mounted for counter-rotating about respective second and third upright axes located ahead of and at opposite sides of said first mentioned upright axis; and each cane top rotor including a plurality of fan blades for generating a stream of air for aiding in the sideways discharge of cane top pieces.

5. (original) The topper/shredder mechanism, as defined in claim 4, wherein

each of said cane top gathering rotors includes a plurality of vertically spaced disks;  
and said disks each containing holes for permitting air to be drawn through them due  
to the action of said fan blades.

6. (cancelled)